

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (May his blessings remain on us for a long time),  
Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

# Memories

## (Episode 5)

### Migration to Pakistan

Meanwhile, the question was heard in the house several times as to whether we should migrate to Pakistan or not. Our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him), on the instructions of his Shaykh Hakeem Ul Ummah Hazrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Sahab Thanwi, and his teacher Shaykhul Islam Hazrat Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon them both) had taken a prominent role in the Pakistan Movement. Shaykhul Islam Hazrat Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had already migrated to Pakistan, and the Quaid-e-Azam (Great Leader) of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah had requested him to raise the flag of Pakistan for the first time. After the creation of Pakistan the first effort of Hazrat Shaykhul Islam (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) was for the formation of an Islamic Constitution. For this he had persuaded respected Jinnah Sahab and the then Prime Minister Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan Sahab to seek help from senior Islamic scholars of the time for establishing Islamic foundations of the Constitution. And as a start my respected father Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafee' Sahab, Hazrat Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani and Dr Hamidullah Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon them) were chosen. They were invited to come to Pakistan and to formulate Islamic foundations of the Constitution within three months in the form of a report.

It was very difficult for our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) to permanently leave Deoband and migrate to Pakistan for various reasons. Firstly, he had various kinds of activities in Deoband which were not easy to leave. Secondly, our respected paternal grandmother (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon her) used to live with him. It was difficult to leave her alone in Deoband, and also difficult to take her along due to her old age. Also, these were dangerous times in terms of security. Furthermore there were two married daughters whom it was difficult to take along at that time, and in those times the idea of one's children living in a different country used to be painful to imagine. Thirdly, if he resigned from Darul Uloom, the only source of income would be the bookstore Darul Isha'at and transporting it to Pakistan, in those perilous times, was a mission impossible. Fourthly, in various parts of the country, Muslims were being openly killed by Hindus and Sikhs throughout the country, and anyone migrating to Pakistan had to cross rivers of fire and blood at each step. Fifthly, there was no confirmed source of income in Pakistan. Due to these reasons the question remained under discussion in the family for many days as to whether migrating to Pakistan was appropriate or not. Hazrat Maulana Ihtishamul Haq Sahab Thanwi (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him), who was the Khateeb<sup>1</sup> in the

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<sup>1</sup> One who delivers sermons, e.g. for Friday and Eid prayers

mosque of Delhi Secretariat before the creation of Pakistan, had migrated to Pakistan almost at the same time as Hazrat Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him). Allama Usmani (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had sent him to Deoband to invite our respected father. The opinion of many people in the family was against migration, due to the reasons mentioned above. However, our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) finally decided that the Pakistan for the making of which we had spent our energy and hard work until now, it is necessary to play our role in laying its correct foundations, and its building and progress.

This was a tough decision for our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) but Allah Ta'ala had given him extraordinary courage due to which, notwithstanding all the problems, he told his family members to prepare for Hijrat (migration). Being a small child, I was not aware of the problems but I could notice the mixed emotions of happiness and grief in the atmosphere of the house. Our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had spent most of his life in a small room of his ancestral house, and few years ago, with much zeal and zest, he had had a new house constructed in which we were living then. In addition, he was also interested in gardening for which he had planted a garden near G.T. Road. He would visit the garden, often after Asar, whenever he got some free time from his scholarly duties. Many times I would accompany him. He had especially planted mango trees in that garden and that year would give the first harvest. He had also had a room made there. The entire family would sometimes gather in that room and enjoy the fresh air of the garden. Leaving all these things all at once was definitely a test of patience, because it was certain that leaving them would mean that all those possessions would automatically be taken over by the government. However, after our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had made the decision to leave he used to say: "The day I took the step out of the house and the garden, all those possessions left my heart." The reality is that this definition of Zuhd (ascetism) which I later read in books and heard from elders, that one should not set one's heart on worldly possessions, and while one may possess wealth but the love of this wealth should not be ingrained in the heart; we saw the real-life example of this Zuhd (ascetism) in each matter relating to our respected father. May Allah Ta'ala have limitless mercy on him.

Our respected father had decided to take his unmarried children with him and to leave behind his married children for the time being. Two of our elder married sisters and Bhai Jaan, i.e. respected Muhammad Zaki Kaifi (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him), had to stay in Deoband according to this resolution. Thus preparations began according to this resolution, and finally the day of 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1948 came on the night of which we had to depart from Deoband. I still remember that several ladies of our family had gathered in the drawing room of the house, and two of our sisters who were going with us, about whom I have written previously that they used to compose poetry, had composed a poem addressing the country. I remember the following couplet of that poem since then:

Greetings to you, as we're going far away

Here, we're shedding our last tears today

Those two sisters of mine were reciting their poem to the ladies, and all had tears in their eyes. That same night we took the train at Deoband, and our first stop was to be Delhi where, according to our

plan, we were supposed to stay for one day. An officer of the Delhi Secretariat had come to Delhi station to receive our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him), and we were to stay at his house for the night. He had come in a black Austin car. As far as I can remember, this was the first time I was seeing and travelling in a car, and I still remember the ecstasy of this honour, in that the fragrance pervading the car is still infused in my memory.

How did the day pass in Delhi? I don't remember. But I do remember that the next day we boarded the train at Delhi Railway Station from the platform which is detached from the central platform (because this was the platform for trains which travel on the short railway line which goes towards Rajasthan). Even though it was decided for our elder brother to not migrate to Pakistan yet, he had come to send us off till Delhi. And I still remember the scene; he was standing alone, and our train was gradually leaving the platform. The bridges of Red Fort could be seen beside the platform. Thus, even after reaching Pakistan, whenever I would think about Bhai Jaan I would visualize him standing on that platform and behind him would be the Red Fort!

It is obvious that how would a child who is in his fifth year of life have any idea about the underlying hardships of leaving one's country, the creation of a new country and permanently migrating to that country? As a result, I was blissfully ignorant of all those problems, and only knew that I have a long train journey with my parents and siblings. I would thus keep clinging to a window of the train chugging along, and would enjoy the hustle-bustle of each new station. I didn't even know that before leaving any station the steam-exuding engine of the train whistles three times, and the train takes off after the third whistle. Thus when my two elder brothers would hear the sound of the whistle or see the green flag of the guard they would ask me: "Do you want to make the train move?" When I would nod in affirmation they would push a wall of the train and the train would start moving. And I would be dumbfounded how they could control the train while sitting inside? I also remember from this journey that I was sitting near a window with a *roti*<sup>1</sup> in hand watching the scene of the train leaving the station when suddenly an eagle flew in and snatched the *roti* from my hand.

From Delhi we reached Jodhpur, the city in Rajasthan, and spent a night there. Of that stay I only remember that the house in which we stayed was adjacent to the railway track, from which I saw a foul-smelling cargo train which was probably used for throwing waste and garbage somewhere far away. From Jodhpur we reached Baarh Meel station where a box containing the clothes of two of our sisters was somehow lost, and finding which caused much distress. After this came the station after which Pakistan was to start. We had to pass customs check here, and Indian officers were doing a stringent check of the belongings of emigrants, especially not allowing them to carry any unstitched clothes. Perhaps this was done to make their slogan of "Hungry, naked Pakistan" a reality, to show the emigrants that they would not even have clothes to wear in the country they had demanded. Among our belongings was a sewing machine which also the Indian customs officers confiscated. After a grueling customs check our train departed, and soon we entered Pakistan. Our next station was Hyderabad,

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<sup>1</sup> A roti:



Sindh, where also we also stayed for one night. I only remember one thing from that time; slanted air ducts<sup>1</sup> could be seen in almost all houses, which were fascinating for us people from U.P.<sup>2</sup>

After our stay in Hyderabad we finally reached Karachi City Railway Station on 6 May 1948. Hazrat Maulana Ihtishamul Haq Sahab Thanwi and our respected father's friend Khaleefah Muhammad 'Aaqil Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon them) had come to receive us. Since our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had arrived at the government's invitation, the government had arranged for our stay in a flat on the third floor of a building called King's Court, which was located on Victoria Road in Saddar. We all slept on the floor for some days, whereafter beds were arranged for. This was a beautiful flat the windows of which opened on Victoria Road, which is today known as Abdullah Haroon Road, and in view of the hustle and bustle of two-way traffic and shops which exists today, it is difficult to imagine the Victoria Road of 1948 which used to be the most beautiful road of the city due to its cleanliness and tranquil atmosphere. On its right was the central highway of the city, Bandar Road, which is today called Quaid-e-A'zam Road, and it was here that the central Tram Station was located which was called Tram Berth. On the left was the lively market of Saddar. In those days all the important roads of Karachi used to be washed daily. For us, coming from the village environment of Deoband, there were many things of interest here. From this same road the Governor General, Prime Minister and foreign heads of state used to pass by.

King's Court, which still exists with the same name, was a four-storey residential building and in terms of its residents it could be called a multicultural building. We were staying on the third floor. Above us on the fourth floor a famous industrialist of Sindh, respected Muhammad Laiq Lakho Sahab used to live who was an elegant representative of the Sindhi culture. "Lakho" is an esteemed community of Sindh, but at that time he was known as "Lakha Sahab" in the neighbourhood, and my childhood mind understood this to mean that he is a *Lakh-pati* (millionaire), that's why he is called "Lakha". We had almost family-like relations with them. Lakho Sahab's respected wife would be very affectionate to us brothers, and used to treat us like an elder sister. Their son respected Ghulam Basheer was like a brother to us. I was around five years old and would go to their house without any formality or hesitation. Lakho Sahab's wife used to make Ghee *Rotis* in the traditional Sindhi method of using a flat pan, which I used to like very much, and she used to feed me with great love and affection. Their house



<sup>1</sup> A fancy example of roof air ducts, called "Mangh" in Sindhi language:

<sup>2</sup> The town of Deoband is located in U.P. (Uttar Pradesh) district

also used to have the traditional Sindhi swinging bedstead<sup>1</sup> on which we children used to enjoy swinging. On top of the house was an open roof which used to be our playground after Asar. Ghulam Basheer Sahab was also a small child and used to come to our house without any formality. The ladies of Lakho Sahab's house had a close relationship with the ladies of our house. In short, all the time that we spent there, we would be so much a part of the ups and downs of each other's life that one could assume we all were one family. When we later left that building we maintained contact with each other. Respected Lakho Sahab and his son respected Ghulam Basheer Sahab have passed away, but the son of Ghulam Basheer Sahab, respected Ghulam Hadi Sahab, runs an estate agency, and we still have contact with him.

Below us (i.e. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor) respected Wazeer Gul Sahab used to stay. He was a Lieutenant Commander in the Navi and hailed from NWFP (today's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). With them also we had such deep relations that his wife used to call our mother as her mother. Their son Shah Jahan and his sisters used to come to our house often, and if ever the wife of respected Wazeer Gul Sahab faced any problem she would take advice from our mother.

On the third floor, in front of our flat, was another flat in which a Parsi family belonging to the Memon community used to live. Designs made with powder could be seen outside their house, which used to be considered a sign of Parsi families in those times.

An immigrant government officer from Saharanpur resided on the first floor, and on the ground floor a middle-aged British couple used to live. The British man was handicapped by one hand. An old-looking convertible (roofless) car used to be parked beside their house, which used to take more service from its owner than providing service to him. We used to often see that whenever they wanted to go somewhere in the evening, he could be seen with tools in hand, sometimes in front of the bonnet and sometimes lying under the car. Thereafter, after showering and getting ready, the husband and wife would get in the car. The sound of the engine switching on would tell us that despite its growling and groaning the car had acceded to serve them.

Thus multi-coloured cultures were united in that four-storey building. Our respected father would fulfill the rights of all those neighbours, in accordance with the hierarchy defined in Shariah. And our childhood, which was not interested in anything besides play and amusement, would derive entertainment from all of them. All these multi-coloured, multi-racial families had such brotherly relations that despite their cultural differences all would share in the ups and downs of each other's lives. I remember that once a terrifying fire had struck a cotton warehouse. Even though it was located at least 3 to 4 miles away from our house, we could feel the frightening smoke of that fire just behind the building which was in front of ours. Seeing the smoke, all the young men from our building

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional Sindhi swinging bedstead called "Peengho" in Sindhi language:



immediately rushed in the direction of that smoke. Our elder brother, respected Muhammad Razi Sahab was one of them. I saw from the window that within a few moments a big crowd of people is racing towards the fire from every neighbouring building. After many hours, when Bhai Sahab returned, he informed us that the fire had broken out very far from our house, at the cotton warehouse of City Station, and everybody had helped in extinguishing the fire. While extinguishing the fire, a piece of burning cotton had fallen on Bhai Sahab's foot, and the wound remained for several days.

This is how fascinating scenes of mutual love would be seen in those days. Today, the eyes long to see such scenes again.

Those were difficult times for our parents. For the first three months, our respected father, Hazrat Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani and Dr Hamidullah Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on them) remained busy in preparing the report regarding recommendations for the Constitution, for which they would receive some honorarium. However, after the report my respected father had no source of income. All four sons were too young to work, and their biggest issue was education so it was difficult to involve them in any significant income-generating activity. Regarding the cash which could be carried from Deoband, it was decided that it was not appropriate to keep cash during the travel. Thus our respected father used all the cash to buy a gold necklace from a goldsmith in Deoband, and gave it to our respected mother (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on her) to wear, so that in time of need it could be sold. Thus when no other source of income remained, they took the gold necklace to a goldsmith in Karachi. He examined the necklace and told that it was fake. The goldsmith from whom this necklace was bought had deceived them by perhaps gold-plating a brass necklace, and selling it off as a gold necklace. The only leftover money thus vanished into thin air, but I still remember that our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) would remember this event with a laugh on his face.

Our respected father had contacts with many people, from the Prime Minister to lower level officers, and many of them would visit our home. However none of them knew the difficult times our house was facing. Even we children did not know what tough times our respected father was facing. However, we noticed that our respected mother used to make Daal for many days. I don't remember this myself, but my elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafee' Usmani Sahab (May his shade be extended), who was ten years old at that time, tells that one day he complained to our mother that you only make Daal every day. At that point, for the first time, our respected mother said in front of him: "Do you even know that your father has no source of income."

A friend of our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him), Khaleefa Muhammad 'Aaqil Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him), was a student of our paternal grandfather Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yaseen Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) and was a teacher of Persian and Mathematics at Darul Uloom Deoband. But due to being involved in the Pakistan Movement he also had resigned from Darul Uloom, and after Shaykhul Islam Hazrat 'Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) he had also migrated to Pakistan, before our migration. He had opened a grocery store here which was located between Saddar and Jacob Line. In those initial days, when our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) had no source of income, he would forcefully

send some groceries from his shop to our house. It was only later that we came to know that for some time the food in our house was prepared from those groceries.

On the one side was the earnestness of Hazrat Khaleefa Muhammad 'Aaqil Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) that he would send groceries to our house without keeping any record. On the other side, our respected father's (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) characteristic of keeping clean and clear business dealings was such that he would keep a record of everything we received from the shop. Thus when Allah Ta'ala bestowed easy times upon us, our respected father presented a gift to Hazrat Khaleefa Sahab, which was of value equivalent to the total amount of groceries he had sent to us. (Later on it so happened that he himself had to face a tough time, and in those days our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) had financial ease, so he helped Hazrat Khaleefa Sahab in those difficult times.)

(Continued)